



UNIVERSALISTIC AMBITIONS, DEIFICATION AND CLAIMS OF DIVINE ORIGIN OF MESOPOTAMIAN RULERS: THE LAGAŠ II DYNASTY

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*As I rose over my city like sun-god Utu, suspended
in its midst, I filled the Etemenniguru, founded with
divine powers, with princely cornelian.¹*

King Šulgi

1. INTRODUCTION²

The aim of this article is to examine the relation between universalistic ambitions, the claims of divine origin and deification, and to trace the interrelated development of these phenomena to the Neo-Sumerian rulers belonging to the Lagaš II dynasty³ (22nd century BC), during the epoch of Gudea (2144–2124⁴ BC) and his dynasty – from ruler Ur-Ningirsu I to Nammaḥani, last ruler of independent Lagaš.⁵ I will thus provide an overview of those rulers of Lagaš II dynasty who claimed divine origin, demonstrating how some of them tried to establish their deification using

¹ “A praise poem of Šulgi (Šulgi C)” – ETCSL: translation: t.2.4.2.03, last visited 30.03.2017.

² This article was written with the financial support of grant PUT500. I am very thankful for critical remarks to Dr. Mait Kõiv.

³ This period of Lagaš II dynasty (or Gudea dynasty) started after the collapse of the Akkadian Empire (2334–2154 BC), which took place around 2154 BCE.

⁴ All dates here are presented in middle chronology

⁵ RIME 3/1; see also Edmond **Sollberger**, “The Rulers of Lagaš” – *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 21 (1967), 279–291.

universalistic expressions and, in some cases, universalistic titles and epithets. About deification of kings in Early Dynastic (2800–2335 BC) period, in Akkadian epoch (2334–2154 BC) and in Ur III period (2112–2004 BC) a lot has been written, but on the question related to deification of Gudea⁶ the written works are few.⁷

In a previous article on universalistic ambitions, deification and claims of divine origin of Ancient Mesopotamian rulers I showed that in Early Dynastic Sumer, at least during the latter part of that period (Early Dynastic III, c. 2600–2335 BC), some rulers were represented in royal inscriptions as having divine origin, at the same time using universalistic expressions for themselves.⁸

The deification of a ruler in Mesopotamia began with the Akkadian king Narām-Sin⁹ (2254–2218 BC), and as will be demonstrated, the

⁶ See more on Gudea – RIME 3/1 = Dietz-Otto **Edzard**, *Gudea and His Dynasty. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Early Periods, Vol. 3/1.* (Toronto-Buffalo-London: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Claudia E. **Suter**, *Gudea's Temple Building. The Representation of Early Mesopotamian Ruler in Text and Image.* (Groningen: STYX Publications, 2000); Cladia E. **Suter**, "Gudea of Lagash: Iconoclasm or Tooth of Time?" – *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond.* Ed. N. Naomie May (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2012), 57–88; Claudia E. **Suter**, "The Divine Gudea on Ur III Seal Images" – *Beyond Hatti. A Tribute to Gary Beckman.* Billie Jean Collins and Piotr Michalowski, eds. (Lockwood Press: Atlanta, 2013), 309–324; Luděk **Vacín**, "Gudea and Ningišzida: A Ruler and His God" – *u4 du11-ga-ni sa mu-ni-ib-du11. Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Blahoslav Hruška.* Ed. L. Vacín (Dresden: ISLET-Verlag, 2011), 253–275.

⁷ E.g., Vladimir V. **Emelianov**, "The Identity of Gudea as a Cultural and Historical Problem" – *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, 390/4 (2016), 63–76.

⁸ My previous article (Vladimir **Sazonov**, "Universalistic Ambitions and Claims of Divine Origin of Sumerian and Akkadian Rulers" – *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, 390/4 (2016), 31–61) analyses the problem of universalistic ambitions, deification and claims of divine origin of Ancient Mesopotamian rulers in the Early Dynastic Period and Akkadian Period, and suggests that although the claims of divine origin, the universalistic claims and the deification of a king were always closely connected, though the connection was not straightforward and automatic. For universalistic titles see Tohru **Maeda**, "King of Kish" in Pre-Sargonic Sumer" – *Oriente* 17 (1981), 1–17; Tohru **Maeda**, "King of the Four Regions" in the Dynasty of Akkade" – *Oriente* 20 (1984), 67–82.

⁹ Concerning Narām-Sin, see for example, Piotr **Michalowski**, "New Sources concerning the Reign of Naram-Sin" – *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 32/4 (1980), 233–246; Walter **Farber**, "Die Vergöttlichung Naramsins" – *OrNS* 52 (1983), 67–72; Vladimir **Sazonov**, "Vergöttlichung der Könige von Akkade", – *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 374 (2007), 330–333; Sazonov, "Universalistic Ambitions and Claims of Divine Origin of Sumerian and Akkadian Rulers", 48–50.

claims for divine status of Narām-Sîn and of the kings of the Ur III dynasty Šulgi (2093–2046 BC)¹⁰ and Amar-Su'ena (2045–2038 BC) were linked directly to their supposed divine origin and their universalistic aspirations. The deified rulers in Mesopotamia did not always claim to have divine origin, as I have demonstrated in my previous research.¹¹

1.1. Universalistic ambitions of a ruler

Universalistic ambitions or aspirations mean that a ruler claims to be the sovereign of the whole universe¹². This idea was reflected in the usage of different universalistic expressions like: from the Lower Sea to the Upper Sea¹³; or from East to West; or in the universalistic titles like the king of the universe¹⁴; or the king of the four corners¹⁵. However, at the beginning such titles and epithets were used for important gods and only later, from ca 2400 BC, we have evidence that universalistic expressions were used by the rulers themselves. And only since ca 2330 BC (Akkadian period), and later in Ur III period, were the universalistic titles and epithets introduced as an official part of royal titulary of kings such as Sargon, Narām-Sîn of Akkad, or the Neo-Sumerian kings like Ur-Namma and Šulgi etc.

¹⁰ Concerning Šulgi e.g. **Vladimir Sazonov**, “Kuningas Šulgi laul: mõned märkused uussumeri kuninga Šulgi (2093–2046) kuningavõimu ideoloogia kohta” – *Usuteaduslik Ajakiri* 57/1 (2008), 84–107; Alessandro **Di Ludovico**, “The Reign of Šulgi Investigation of a King Above Suspicion” – *Krieg und Frieden im Alten Vorderasien. 52e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale International Congress of Assyriology and Near Eastern Archaeology Münster, 17.–21. Juli 2006*. Hans Neumann *et al.*, eds. (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 401. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014) 481–493; Walther **Sallaberger**, Aage **Westenholz**, *Mesopotamien: Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit*. (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis. 160/3. Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1999), 152–154.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² We must, of course, keep in mind that an understanding of the Mesopotamians “universe” would mean ruling over the whole Mesopotamian region.

¹³ From the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea – see more Robert **Rollinger**, “From Sargon of Agade, and the Assyrian Kings to Khusrau I and beyond: on the persistence of Ancient Near Eastern Traditions” – *LEGGO! Studies presented to Prof. Frederick Mario Fales on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*. Giovanni B. Lanfranchi, Daniele Morandi Bonacossi, Cinzia Pappi, Simonetta Ponchia, eds. (Leipziger Altorientalische Studien 2. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 725–743.

¹⁴ Maeda, ““King of Kish” in Pre-Sargonic Sumer”.

¹⁵ Maeda, ““King of the Four Regions” in the Dynasty of Akkade”.

1.2. *The deified ruler*

The deified ruler is mentioned in cuneiform texts usually (but not always) with the divine classifier – *diġir*-sign.¹⁶ In iconography another divine classifier the *horned crown* appears as a very important marker of divinity. Both these markers of divinity were cornerstones of deification and were of course very tidily connected.

1.3. *Diġir-sign*

The *diġir*-sign in the Sumerian language signifies *god, divine or deified*. Placed before the personal name, either of a human being, a god, or a demon, the *diġir* showed that the person was deified. *Diġir* was mostly used in referring to gods and goddesses, for example, Enlil, Enki or Utu,¹⁷ but in some cases it was used before the names of the rulers of Akkad like Narām-Sîn, Šulgi, or of the Ur III dynasty like Amar-Su’ena, Šu-Su’en, etc.

1.4. *Horned crown*

The other important divine classifier – the *horned crown* – was already attested in the Early Dynastic period II, ca 2700–2600 BC, as established by Gebhard Selz.¹⁸ Selz states that “*the horned crown therefore symbolizes the vigour of life and reproduction and links the concept of divinity specifically to agriculture and cattle breeding*”.¹⁹ Mesopotamian rulers were often compared to bulls, while the bull’s might and reproductive power were often associated with the mighty power of deified kings, heroes or gods. In the Mesopotamian iconography we can find many depictions (statues of deities, cylinder seals, bas-reliefs etc.) of gods, goddesses, demons or spirits wearing horned crowns, and we have some attestations of rulers depicted

¹⁶ Nicole **Brisch**, “Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia” – *Religion Compass* 7/2, (2013), 37–46.

¹⁷ See Gebhard J. **Selz**, “The Divine Prototypes” – Nicole Brisch (Ed.), *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008), 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

in art with a horned crown, like in the case of Narām-Sîn of Akkad.²⁰

1.5. The solar king as a form of deification

Another important form of royal deification was the claim to the status of sun-god. This appears in the case of some kings of the Ur III period (Šulgi, Amar-Su'ena etc.) when the solar aspect of their kingship was clearly represented in the royal ideology.²¹ Here however we must notice that the role of the sun-god (Sumerian Utu and Akkadian Šamaš) was changed significantly in Sumero-Akkadian royal ideology and cults from Akkadian period.²² Claudia Fischer points out that “*in the existing god lists that have come down to us, the sun-god Utu/Šamaš is never awarded a supreme rank. He is only poorly attested during the Akkadian period and during the reign of the Ur III kings, based on evidence from Ur and Nippur, where he was one of the “minor” gods.*”²³ It seems that in the Early Dynastic Period the role of sun-god was more important than in the Akkadian period. According to Claudia Fischer “*the Sumerian sun-god Utu, it should be pointed out, did not always have a secondary status. Utu is, for instance, well represented in the pre-Sargonic period, especially in the mythological tradition of the early kings of Uruk. Several old Sumerian kings speak of Utu as “their king”. The Sumerian King List names Meskiaggaser, a ruler of the First Dynasty of Uruk, as a “son of Utu”.*”²⁴

²⁰ Winfried **Orthmann**, *Der alte Orient, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte* (Frankfurt a. M., 1985), illustr. 104.

²¹ Luděk **Vacín**, “On the Solar Aspect of the King in Ur III Royal Ideology” – *Chatreššar* 2009. Jan Bičovský and Pavel Čech, eds. (Poříčany: Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Arts, 2009), 171–179.

²² Claudia **Fischer**, “Twilight of the Sun-God” – *Iraq*, Vol. 64 (2002), 125–134.

²³ *Ibid.*, 130.

²⁴ *Ibidem*; See also Christopher **Woods**, “Sons of the Sun: The Mythological Foundations of the First Dynasty of Uruk” – *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 12 (2012), 78–96. According to the *Sumerian King List*, some heroic and mythological kings of the first Dynasty of Uruk were deified – e.g. Meskiaggaser, Dumuzi, Lugalbanda, and Gilgamesh. The *dišir*-sign before the name of Meskiaggaser (the founder of the dynasty) was not used, but the king still was mentioned in the *Sumerian King List* as son of (sun god) Utu: *in Eanna, Meš-ki-ağ-gašer, the son of (sun god) Utu, became lord and king (and) he ruled for 324 (325) years* – e₂-an-na-ka meš₃-ki-ağ₂-ga-še-er dumu dutu en-am₃ lugal-am₃ mu 324 (325) i₁-ak (*Sumerian King List*, lines 95–98, ETCSL: transliteration c.2.1.1). Sebastian Fink proposed that the legendary king of Uruk Meskiaggaser was deified as a demi-god and represented as the son of the sun-god

1.6. Divine origin of ruler – another form of deification?

Having divine origin probably was not a prerequisite for complete deification, but can still be seen as a trend towards this. Nevertheless, claims for divine origin mean that the ruler claimed that his predecessors or parents were gods, or were somehow associated with gods, although the ruler himself did not necessarily claim divine status, i.e. did not use the marker of divinity *diĝir* and was never portrayed with the horned crown. On the other hand, we can find many cases when a ruler assigned to himself divine status, but did not mention his divine origin, never claiming divine origin and never mentioning that his mother or father or some other relatives were gods – e.g., the Akkadian king Narām-Sîn declaring himself a god.²⁵ On the other hand, the Neo-Sumerian king Šulgi was not only deified during his reign, and given the status of a sun-god, but also claimed to have divine origin, calling himself the first born son of the goddess Nanše.²⁶ Both Narām-Sîn and Šulgi used universalistic titles and epithets and both were deified during their reign.

2. SOURCES FROM LAGAŠ II DYNASTY

From Post-sargonic Lagaš we have some written material – there are royal inscriptions that originated from Lagaš II Dynasty²⁷, dating from the reign of Ur-Ningirsu until Nammaḥani.²⁸

Utu (Sebastian **Fink**, “The Genealogie of Gilgamesh” – *Classica & Christiana*, Nr 8\1 (2013), 81–107. Enmerkar, who was son of Meski-agasher, was also called son of the sun-god Utu (*Enmerkar, son of (son-god) Utu* – en-me-er-kar₂ dumu dutu-ra – ETCESL: c.1.8.2.1, line 19, last visited 10.07.2017), and it seems that he was deified. However, we perhaps cannot exclude the possibility that the idea of a king as a son of the sun god originates from Early Dynastic Uruk, but we must take into account that the text of the *Sumerian King List* was apparently composed later, in Ur III period when kings like Šulgi and Amar-Su’ena called themselves “sun” or “sun-god”. So, it is more possible that the idea of sun-king was invented in Ur III period (see more – Sazonov, “Universalistic Ambitions and Claims of Divine Origin of Sumerian and Akkadian Rulers”, 36–38).

²⁵ Sazonov, “Vergöttlichung der Könige von Akkade”, 330–333.

²⁶ RIME 3/2: Šulgi E3/2.1.2.14, p. 124, lines 1–3.

²⁷ Piotr **Steinkeller**, “The Date of Gudea and His Dynasty” – *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 40 (1988), 47–53.

²⁸ RIME 3/1.

2.1. *Ur-Ningirsu I*

We do not have any evidence about deification, divine origin or using universalistic expressions, titles or epithets by Ur-Ningirsu I (22nd century BC), ruler of Lagaš. Maybe the problem is related to the fact that very few royal inscriptions of Ur-Ningirsu I have been found so far (only 6 short royal inscriptions).

2.2. *Pirig-me*

From the next ruler of Lagaš II Dynasty Pirig-me (22nd century BC) who was son of Ur-Ningirsu we have only one short inscription, in which he is mentioned as *chosen in the heart of Nanše, named by Ningirsu, child born of Ninsun* (šà-ge-pà-da-^dnanše-ka-ke₄ mu-pà-da).²⁹ So, Pirig-me was the first ruler in Post-sargonic Lagaš (Lagaš II) who claimed that he had divine origin, but he was not the first ruler of Lagaš who did so.³⁰ Pirig-me never used universalistic expressions, epithets or titles towards gods or himself.

2.3. *Lu-Bau, Lugula and Kaku*

Lu-Bau, Lugula and Kaku – these rulers of Lagaš ruled in the 22nd century BC and are attested only with their year names.³¹ We do not have any relevant information about the usage of universalistic ambitions or divine origin by these three Lagaš ruler.

2.4. *Ur-Bau*

The next ruler of Lagaš was Ur-Bau (c. 2157–2144 BC) and we have 13 royal inscriptions concerning this ruler. In some of them he was mentioned as *child born of Nin-agala* (dumu-tu-da-^dnin-á-gal-ka-ke4).³² Additionally

²⁹ RIME 3/1: Pirig-me E3/1.1.2.1, lines 10–18.

³⁰ Before him in Early Dynastic period we have several rulers in Lagaš who claimed divine origin. E-anatum of Lagaš I Dynasty or the Dynasty of Ur-Nanše (Ur-Nanše ruled ca 2520 BCE), who had reigned about 2450–2425 BC or a bit later, was the first among the rulers of Lagaš, to claim divine origin - see e.g., RIME 1 E-anatum E1.9.3.1, p. 129, Col iv 9–12.

³¹ RIME 3/1: p. 14.

³² See e.g., RIME 3/1: Ur-Bau E3/1.1.6.1, lines 7–8; Ur-Bau E3/1.1.6.2, lines 6–7; Ur-Bau E3/1.1.6.5, Col i, lines 7–8.

Ur-Bau called himself in one of his inscription in following way:

I, Ur-Bau, ruler of Lagaš, child born of Ninagala, chosen in the heart of Nanše, to whom Ningirsu gave strength, whom Bau called by a favourable name, to whom Enki gave wisdom, the one assigned to the orders of Inanna, beloved slave of Lugal-U., the beloved of Dumuzzi-abzu...³³

A similar formula was used in Early Dynastic Lagaš, for example, E-anatum of Lagaš wrote often in his inscriptions that he was *chosen in the pure heart by the goddess Nanše*,³⁴ *given a pleasant name by the goddess Inanna*.³⁵ Early Dynastic ruler E-anatum is also mentioned several times as a friend of different gods – e.g., *beloved friend of the god LugalxURUxKÁR*.³⁶

Ur-Bau basically copied E-anatum, En-metena and other Pre-sargonic rulers of Lagaš (Lagaš I Dynasty) used such epithets as *child born of Ninagala, chosen in the heart of Nanše, the one assigned to the orders of Inanna, beloved slave of Lugal-U., the beloved of Dumuzzi-abzu and to whom Enki gave wisdom*. For example, Pre-sargonic rulers such as E-anatum and En-metena declared that they were granted the sceptre by the main god Enlil, and with wisdom by the god Enki.³⁷ Though, Ur-Bau was not the first ruler in Lagaš who claimed to be of divine origin, he was the first ruler from II dynasty of Lagaš who claimed to be of divine origin. Ur-Bau was probably an offspring of a sacred marriage.³⁸

So, basically Ur-Bau reintroduced and restored the ideological base and ancient traditions of early dynastic Lagash at its height when Lagaš was ruled by powerful rulers from the Ur-Nanše family such as E-anatum, En-anatum I and En-metena. We can conclude that Ur-Bau reintroduced the phenomenon of divinity of Lagaš kings, which had disappeared simultaneously with the processes of the declining and weakening of political might of the Lagaš I Dynasty (Dynasty of Ur-Nanše). It was now possible,

³³ RIME 3/1: Ur-Bau E3/1.1.6.5, Col i, lines 4–12, Col ii, lines 1–3.

³⁴ RIME 1: E-anatum E1.9.3.4, p. 144, col i 6–8.

³⁵ RIME 1: E-anatum E1.9.3.6, p. 150, col ii 7–8.

³⁶ RIME 1: E-anatum E1.9.3.18, p. 166, col ii 7–8.

³⁷ see e.g., RIME 1: E-anatum E1.9.3.6., col i 10–11 – col ii 1–10; About Enki see – Peeter Espak, P. (2015) *The God Enki in Sumerian Royal Ideology and Mythology* (Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 2015).

³⁸ Vladimir V. **Emelianov**, “The Identity of Gudea as a Cultural and Historical Problem” – *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, Bd. 390/4 (2016), 63.

because Akkad as a state had been destroyed by Gutians, Gutian tribes never controlled Lagaš, and Lagaš after the collapse of Akkad was independent again and probably Lagaš again became more influential and one of the most powerful city-states in Sumer, especially in its southern part.

2.5. Gudea

Lagaš reached the height of its power and prosperity in the reign of Gudea (2144–2124 BC)³⁹, whose epoch is often called a Sumerian “renaissance”. There are some theories suggesting that Gudea was deified. Vladimir Emelianov supposes that “*there is some evidence in favour of lifetime deification of Gudea. An epithet in an inscription on the cylinder B Gudea “ensi, the god of his city” (Cyl. BI 15: ensi₂-ke₄ dingir-iri-na-ke₄), son of (dumu) Ningishzida (B XXIV 7) and mother-goddess (ama-dingir) Gatumdug (B XXIII 19) (Edzard, 1997, 100–101), means that he is an absolute god – by both parents (unlike Bilgames) ”.*⁴⁰

In his article on Gudea Emelianov correctly concluded: “*The status of Gudea is difficult to determine. He was a god of Lagash, but lower than Ningirsu in status. His name is unique and means the position of the prophet of Ningirsu. He had only divine parents, and he named two mothers: Gatumdug and Ninsun*”.⁴¹ According to Emelianov’s hypothesis Gudea had the status of the city god and the prophet of Ningirsu.⁴² This seems possible and written sources support this hypothesis. Let us have a look now at the sources from the period of Gudea which support the theory of Vladimir Emelianov about the deification of Gudea. In *Statue B* of Gudea is written the following:

Col. ii 4–19 - iii 111) Did Gudea, who has a “treasured” name, ruler of Lagaš, shepherd chosen in the hear of Ningirsu, whom Nanše regarded in

³⁹ Claudia E. Suter, *Gudea’s Temple Building. The Representation of Early Mesopotamian Ruler in Text and Image*. (Groningen: STYX Publications, 2000); Claudia E. Suter, “Gudea of Lagash: Iconoclasm or Tooth of Time?” – *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond*. Ed. N. Naomie May (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago), 57–88; Claudia E. Suter, “The Divine Gudea on Ur III Seal Images” – *Beyond Hatti. A Tribute to Gary Beckman*. Billie Jean Collins and Piotr Michalowski, eds. (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2013), 309–324.

⁴⁰ Emelianov, “The Identity of Gudea as a Cultural and Historical Problem”, 65.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 63.

a friendly manner, to whom Nin-dara gave strength, the one keeping to the word of Bau, child born of Gatumdu, to whom Ig-alim gave prestige and a lofty sceptre, whom Sul-šaga richly provided with breath of life, whom Ningišzida, his (personal) god, made stand out gloriously as the legitimate head of the assembly –when Ningirsu had directed his meaningful gaze on this city, had chosen Gudea as the legitimate shepherd in the land, and when he had selected him by his hand from among 216,000 persons...⁴³

This shows that Gudea had close connection to main gods of Lagaš and his divine roots.⁴⁴ For example, Gudea was mentioned here and in several other inscriptions⁴⁵ as *child born of goddess Gatumdu*, which means that he had pretensions of divine origin. And as Emelianov pointed out: “*Gudea and his father-in-law Ur-Bau were the offspring of a sacred marriage*”.⁴⁶ So it seems that Gudea was a god, because he was an offspring of a sacred marriage and he had no mortal and human parents, his parents like parents of Ur-Bau were gods. Gudea in *Cylinder A* of his famous Gudea’s Inscriptions writes about his (personal) divine origin in the following way:

ama nu-tuku-me ama-ḡu₁₀ zé-me / a nu-tuku-me a-ḡu₁₀ zé-me / a-ḡu₁₀ šà-ga
 šu ba-ni-du₁₁ unu₆-a i-tu-e – I have no mother, you are my mother, I have no
 father, you are my father, you had seed of me implanted in the womb, made
 me to be born from the sanctuary.⁴⁷

Emelianov argues that “*Gudea addresses the goddess Gatumdu and calls her his father and his mother, saying that he has neither father nor mother. Then it is said that Gatumdu took Gudea as a seed and bore him in the sanctuary*”.⁴⁸

Gudea tried to use the same formula of divine origin which was introduced by E-anatum ca 2400 BC:

The god Ningirsu rejoiced over E-anatum, semen implanted in the womb by the god Ningirsu.⁴⁹

⁴³ Statue B – RIME 3/1: Gudea E 3/1.1.7.STB: Col. ii 4–19 - Col. iii 1–11.

⁴⁴ See also Suter, “The Divine Gudea on Ur III Seal Images”.

⁴⁵ See e.g., Statue D – RIME 3/1: Gudea E.

⁴⁶ Emelianov, “The Identity of Gudea as a Cultural and Historical Problem”, 63.

⁴⁷ RIME 3/1: Gudea E3/1.1.7. CylA, Col iii: 6–8

⁴⁸ Emelianov, “The Identity of Gudea as a Cultural and Historical Problem”, 65.

⁴⁹ RIME 1: E-anatum E1.9.3.1, p. 129–130, col v 1–5.

Gudea accentuated several times that his mother was the goddess Gatumdu. For example, in one of his inscriptions (Statue F) Gudea wrote about his origin:

... to whom Gatumdu, his lady, had given birth out /of the womb, being)
Lagaš, her beloved city...⁵⁰

At this time Gudea was a powerful ruler who controlled large territories in Sumer, and according to his texts had in Lagaš 216 000 citizen, out of whom he was “chosen” as a ruler by god Ningirsu.⁵¹ However, Gudea never called himself a king (lugal) and never used universalistic titles or epithets for himself, but he was the first ruler from Lagaš II Dynasty who used this universalistic expressions towards several important gods, mentioning Inanna as nin-kur-kur-ra – *lady of all the lands*.⁵²

The first ruler who invented the universalistic expressions in Sumer and began to use them towards the gods was again E-anatum of Lagaš. E-anatum used different universalistic expressions such as “*all foreign lands*” that he “*had destroyed*” or “*conquered*”:

All the foreign lands trembled before E-anatum, the nominee of the god Ningirsu.⁵³

E-anatum, who has strength, declares the (all) foreign lands belongs to him.⁵⁴

E-anatum destroyed (all) foreign lands for the god Ningirsu.⁵⁵

This emphasis on subjugation, destruction and conquest of (all) foreign lands by the ruler of Lagash for the god Ningirsu is a new ideological phenomenon invented by E-anatum. Before him this motif never appeared in Sumerian history. This idea was clearly connected to E-anatum’s expansionistic policy and shows the connection between the postulation of divine origin and universalistic aspirations.

Gudea saw himself the new E-anatum, who was the most powerful and successful conqueror in the history of Lagaš, and therefore introduced

⁵⁰ Statue F – RIME 3/1: Gudea E3/1.1.7.StF, Col. i 12- Col. ii 1.

⁵¹ Statue B – RIME 3/1: Gudea E 3/1.1.7.StB, Col. iii 6–11.

⁵² Statue C – RIME 3/1: Gudea E 3/1.1.7.StC, Col. ii, 2.

⁵³ RIME 1: E-anatum E1.9.3.5, p. 147, col iv 20–v 8.

⁵⁴ RIME 1: E-anatum E1.9.3.1, p. 130, col v 20–22.

⁵⁵ RIME 1: E-anatum E1.9.3.1, p. 132, col xi 21–23.

universalistic expressions and epithets, e.g., “*The stone which he set up facing the sunrise he called “the king, the roaring storm of Enlil, the lord without a rival, yea the lord Ningirsu, chose Gudea in his pure heart”. The stone which he set up facing Šugalam he called the king at whose name the (all) foreign lands tremble, year the lord Ningirsu, established Gudea’s throne*”.⁵⁶ On Cylinder B Gudea used also different universalistic epithets and expressions towards the gods and indirectly towards himself:

O all you Anūna gods who are admiring (what) the Land Lagaš (achieved) protectors of all the countries, whose command, a torrent water, will make the one who (would try to) stem it founder, (but) have given a long life to the worthy man upon whom they looked.⁵⁷

2.6. Gudea as the god of his city

On Cylinder B Gudea uses a very interesting epithet towards himself: “ensi (city ruler), the god of his city” (Cyl. B I 15: énsi-ke₄ diğir-iri-na-ke₄) and according to Emelianov’s theory this is evidence for the deification of Gudea.⁵⁸

2.7. The solar aspect of Gudea’s divinity

Gudea also introduced the solar universalistic motif, writing about Ningirsu, the main god of Lagaš:

The owner (god Ningirsu) indeed came out of his [House] (again), and was (like) the sun god rising above the land of Lagaš.⁵⁹

Or later on the same cylinder (Cyl. B) we can find such phrase about Gudea:

Had he not himself risen for his city from the horizon like the sun god?⁶⁰

If in previous sentence the patron god of Lagaš Ningirsu was compared to the sun god, then in this case Gudea was already compared to the sun god

⁵⁶ Cyl. A – RIME 3/1: Gudea E3/1.1.7Cyl A, col. xxiii 19–29.

⁵⁷ Cyl. B – RIME 3/1: Gudea E3/1.1.7CylB, col. i 21b–col ii 1–4.

⁵⁸ Emelianov, “The Identity of Gudea as a Cultural and Historical Problem”, 65.

⁵⁹ Cyl. B – RIME 3/1: Gudea E3/1.1.7CylB, col. v, 8–9.

⁶⁰ Cyl. B – RIME 3/1: Gudea E3/1.1.7CylB, col. xviii, 12–13.

who “risen for his city from the horizon like the sun god”. Later the similar motif was used by the divine kings of the Ur III Dynasty (2112–2004), especially by Šulgi. The solar aspect of the kingship of Šulgi in some texts is clearly visible – for example, in some hymns, e.g. Šulgi C, 25–27:

As I rose over my city like sun-god Utu, suspended in its midst, I filled the Etemenniguru, founded with divine powers, with princely cornelian.⁶¹

In addition, it is known that one of Šulgi’s subordinates was named ^dŠul-[gi]-^dUTUŠi, which means *divine Šulgi is my sun*.⁶² We have several texts that mention Šulgi as a brother or a son of the sun god Utu.⁶³ The son and successor of the king Šulgi, king Amar-Su’ena, continued the tradition of his father and was called “true god, sun god of his land” (dingir-zi ^dutu-kalam-ma-na). It seems that the solar aspect of kings of the Ur III dynasty was necessary in the context of the deification of the ruler and in addition the solar aspect contained universalistic claims, because the sun shines over the world and gives warmth and life to all living things.⁶⁴

2.8. Gudea like Gilgameš (Gilgamesh)

Gudea also liked to compare himself to divine hero Gilgameš⁶⁵ (Bilgameš)

⁶¹ “A praise poem of Šulgi (Šulgi C)” – ETCSL: translation: t.2.4.2.03 (last visited 14.04.2017) 2017.

⁶² Robert A. Di Vito, *Studies in Third Millennium Sumerian and Akkadian Personal Names. The Designation and Conception of the Personal God*, (Studia Pohl: Series Maior, Dissertationes scientiificae de rebus orientis antiqui 16. Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istitutio Biblico, 1993), 169.

⁶³ A praise poem of Šulgi (Šulgi A) – ETCSL: transliteration: c.2.4.2.01, line 79 (last visited 15.06.2017).

⁶⁴ We cannot exclude the possibility that the idea of a ruler as a son of the sun god originates already from Early Dynastic Uruk, because according to the *Sumerian King List*, Enmerkar, son of Meski-agasher and mythological king or Uruk, was also called son of Utu: *Enmerkar, son of (son-god) Utu* – en-me-er-kar₂ dumu dutu-ra – ETCSL: c.1.8.2.1, line 19 (last visited 30.06.201.) and was probably deified. But we must take into account that the text of the *Sumerian King List* was apparently composed later, in Ur III or in the Isin-Larsa period – see e.g., Peeter **Espak**, “Sumeri Kuningate Nimekirja dateerimisest” – *Usuteaduslik Ajakiri* 59 (2009), 63.

⁶⁵ The figure of Gilgamesh played a very important role in Sumerian-Akkadian civilization – especially in cult (e.g., Gilgameš was also deified after his death as an important deity in netherworld), in royal ideology and in the literal legacy. Gilgameš was often regarded as an example by Mesopotamian rulers and as an ideal ruler, a most important hero in Mesopotamia. The Sumerian epic songs about Gilgamesh, written ca 2100–2000 BC,

anticipating the later Neo-Sumerian (Ur III)⁶⁶ king Šulgi (2093–2046 BC)⁶⁷:

Grown as tall as Gilgameš.⁶⁸

Emelianov remarked rightly that “Gudea was the first who made Bilgames his friend”. According to Vladimir Emelianov “this indicates an obsession of Gudea with the idea of immortality”,⁶⁹ which led him to a very interesting conclusion:

Gudea was the first ruler after the legendary Bilgames who was revered in the era of Ur III as a god and had several days given for worship. He was depicted on the seals of the nobles, and the name of Gudea on seals preceded by the determinative DINGIR “god”.⁷⁰

No *diġir*-sign?

Though, *diġir*-sign is one important classifier of divinity of a ruler and was used before the name of the ruler by several rulers in Mesopotamia – e.g., Narām-Sin of Akkad or later by neo-Sumerian king Šulgi, Amar-Su’ena, Šu-Su’en, Ibbi-Su’en etc, we do not have attestation from life time of Gudea that he had used *diġir*-sign (divine classifier) before his name.

were probably the most popular literary works in the Mesopotamian cultural space from the late 3rd to the 1st millennium BC. In the second millennium BC on the basis of these several short Sumerian epic songs the famous *Epic of Gilgameš* was written in Akkadian languages. See more about Gilgameš e.g., Vladimir Sazonov, “On the Epic of Gilgameš in Estonian” – *Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore* 53 (2013), 193–197; Sebastian Fink, “The Genealogie of Gilgameš” – *Classica & Christiana* Nr 8\1 (2013), 81–107; Peeter Espak, “Sumeri Gilgameši surm. Esimene teoloogilis-filosoofiline alustekst” – *Akadeemia* 11 (2013), 1923–1954.

⁶⁶ See about kings of Ur III Dynasty – e.g., Douglas R. Frayne, *Ur III Period (2113–2004)* (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Early Periods, Vol. 3/2). (Toronto – Buffalo – London: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Piotr Michalowski, “The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia” – *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*. Ed. Nicole Brisch (Chicago, 2008), 33–45.

⁶⁷ See *A praise poem of Šulgi* (Šulgi C), Segment A, lines 106–107 (ETCSL transliteration: c.2.4.2.03): “Like my brother and friend Gilgameš, I can recognise the virtuous and I can recognise the wicked”.

⁶⁸ Cyl. B – RIME 3/1: Gudea E3/1.1.7CylB, col. xxiii, 16.

⁶⁹ Emelianov, “The Identity of Gudea as a Cultural and Historical Problem”, 64.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

But still we can suppose that Gudea pretended not only divine origin like it was done by Ur-Bau or by Early dynastic rulers of Lagaš like E-anatum or En-metena, he even pretended to be a god of Lagaš. I absolutely agree with Vladimir Emelianov, about the deification of Gudea:

The status of Gudea is difficult to determine. He was a god of Lagash, but lower than Ningirsu in status. His name is unique and means the position of the prophet of Ningirsu. He had only divine parents, and he named two mothers: Gatumdug and Ninsun.⁷¹

Ur-Ningirsu II

Unfortunately, written material from epoch of Ur-Ningirsu II (2124–2119 BC), son of Gudea, is very poor, we have only ten short royal inscriptions about this ruler⁷², which makes it's very difficult to draw a reasonable conclusion concerning his ideological tendencies. According to his short inscriptions Ur-Ningirsu II never mentioned his divine origin and never used any universalistic expression. It seems that Ur-Ningirsu II was not as powerful as his father. The decline of Lagaš started because of the rise of Utu-ḫegal of Uruk⁷³ (c. 2116–2010 BC) and later Ur-Namma founder of the III Dynasty of Ur, who also founded the powerful centralized Neo-Sumerian kingdom with its capital in Ur.

Ur-GAR

About Ur-GAR (2117 BC – 2113 BC) we know even less than about Ur-Ningirsu. Dietz Otto Edzard wrote about Ur-GAR: *“apart from his inscriptions, nothing is known about this ruler, whose name cannot yet read with certainty”*.⁷⁴ From his reign we have only three very short inscriptions.⁷⁵ On the basis of so poor information we can say nothing about Ur-GAR's royal ideology and usage of universalistic expressions or epithets or claims on divine origin.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁷² RIME 3/1: 181–188.

⁷³ Uruk V Dynasty.

⁷⁴ RIME 3/1: p. 189.

⁷⁵ RIME 3/1: p. 189–191.

Ur-ayabba, Ur-Mama

About these two rulers Ur-ayabba and Ur-Mama we know almost nothing. From Ur-ayabba we have his first year name: “year, Ur-ayabba (became) ruler” (mu ur-ab-ba énsi) and Ur-ayabba’s name was mentioned in the offering list BM 18474 (line 8) between Ur-GAR and Ur-Mama.⁷⁶

From another ruler with the name Ur-Mama we have one very short inscription (Ur-Mama E 3/1.11.1).⁷⁷ This very poor information gives us nothing about their ideology or rule. It seems that these rulers ruled after U-GAR and before Nammaḥani for a very short time (probably less than one year).

Nammaḥani

The last ruler of Lagaš II dynasty was Nammaḥani (2113–2110 BC). He is the last ruler from the Gudea dynasty and from him we have 27 short royal inscriptions.⁷⁸ It seems that Nammaḥani never used any universalistic expressions or epithets towards his gods or himself and never pretended divine origin. Nammaḥani was a very weak ruler and he became the last ruler of the city-state of Lagaš and Nammaḥani had serious conflict with Ur and was defeated by Ur-Namma of Ur III (2112–2094 BC).⁷⁹

3. CONCLUSION

The emergence of the concept of universalistic claims and assertions for divine origin by the Mesopotamian rulers can be traced back to Early Dynastic Lagaš (25th – 24th centuries BC) and was introduced by rulers of Lagaš such as E-anatum and En-metena from Lagaš I Dynasty (dynasty of Ur-Nanše).

⁷⁶ RIME 3/1: p. 192.

⁷⁷ RIME 3/1: p. 192–193.

⁷⁸ RIME 3/1: p. 194–207.

⁷⁹ Jacob J. **Finkelstein**, “The Laws of Ur-Nammu” – *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3/4 (1968–1969), 67, lines 75–77.

After Lagaš (Lagaš I Dynasty) was conquered by Sargon of Akkad in late 24th century BC, the new possibility for universalistic claims and assertions for divine origin for the rulers of Lagaš opened again only after collapse of the Akkadian Empire (c. 2154 BC) and when Lagaš became independent again. The Lagaš' ruler Ur-Bau was the first ruler from Lagaš II Dynasty who claimed that he had divine origin (*child born of Nin-agala*), but he never uses universalistic expressions. This idea of divine origin of rulers of Lagaš culminated during the reign-time of next ruler of Lagaš – Gudea, when Lagaš became a strong city-state that dominated over several territories in Sumer. Gudea claimed not only divine origin for himself (he mentioned that he had divine parents), Gudea also proclaimed that he is the *sun-god Utu of his people who rose over his own city* and he re-introduced universalistic expressions and epithets.

Basically, Gudea did the same what had been done by E-anatum of Lagaš in the Early Dynastic period III, with one exception. E-anatum and his successors from Lagaš I dynasty never claimed that they were like the sun-god Utu, they never compared themselves to a sun-god of Sumer. But Gudea did. Like his predecessors from the dynasty of Ur-Nanše in the Early Dynastic period III Gudea used the gods of Lagaš for justification for his growing internal and external (foreign political) ambitions.⁸⁰

Gudea was the first ruler in Sumer who introduced the idea of solar king, the idea which was later strongly promoted by some Neo-Sumerian kings like Šulgi and later several Assyrian and Babylonian kings of II-I millennia BC like Tukulti-Ninurta I (1242–1206 BC) of Assyria.⁸¹ After his death the Lagaš II Dynasty became steadily weaker and soon collapsed and Lagaš was conquered and incorporated into the Neo-Sumerian kingdom established by the kings of the Ur III dynasty.

⁸⁰ See about theological justification in ancient Lagaš in the Early Dynastic period: Vladimir **Sazonov**, "Justification of Wars and the Ideology of Divine Warfare in Ancient Mesopotamia" – *Festschrift Tarmo Kulmar* 65. Märt Läänemets, Vladimir Sazonov, Peeter Espak, eds. (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2015), 299–302.

⁸¹ See Vladimir **Sazonov**, *Die Assyrischen Königstiteln und -epitheta vom Anfang bis Tukulti-Ninurta I und seinen Nachfolgern*. (USA, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 84–89.